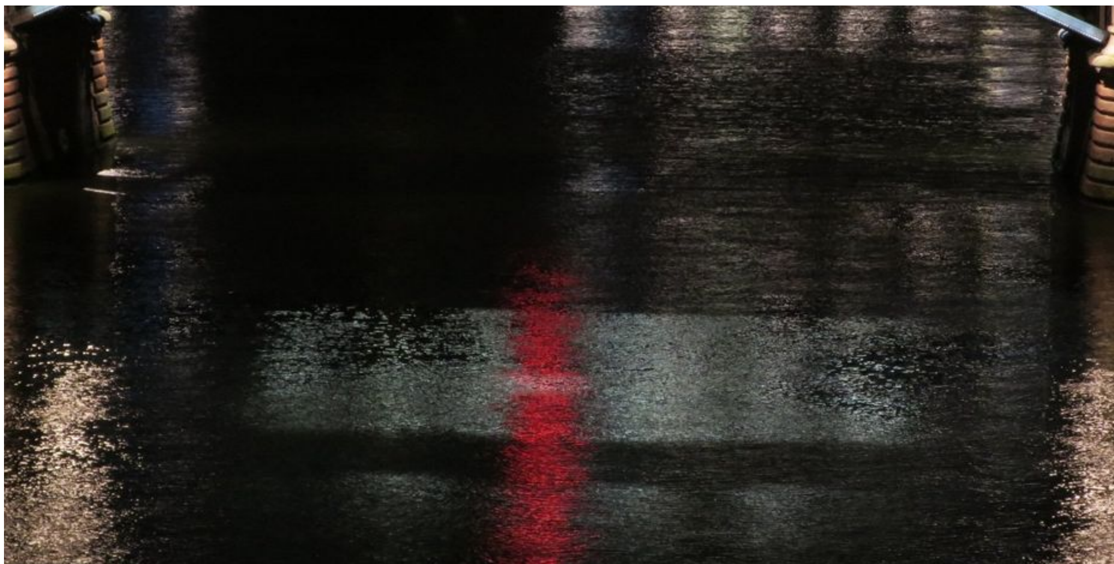








JASPER BERNES 2018-07-28

THE BELLY OF THE REVOLUTION: AGRICULTURE, ENERGY, AND THE FUTURE OF COMMUNISM

ECONOFICTION CAPITAL, CAPITALOCENE, CLIMATE CHANGE, ENERGY, LOGISTICS, MARX, MARXISM, OIL-CAPITALISM, TECHNOLOGY

….The problem is that the energy system and the technology it powers is not at all modular; it is not possible to swap out dirty energy and swap in clean energy, even if all political obstacles were removed and some polity found itself able to rearrange the building blocks of industrial society as it saw fit. The technology they would inherit works with and only with fossil fuels. This lack of modularity is clearest in the case of the more than one billion vehicles built around combustion engines; these can be replaced by non-fossil energy only by manufacturing batteries through highly energy- and resource-intensive processes. At present, even if one were to ignore everything but the arithmetic of greenhouse gases — and given the highly destructive mining processes these batteries require, this means ignoring quite a bit — the benefits of such an energy transition are uncertain, especially if overall energy use continues to grow year on year. As for electricity itself, while one can generate it from cleaner, renewable sources such as wind and solar, the inconsistency of these sources means that, if people want continuous, on-demand energy (and most current technology requires it) they would need to invest massively in resource- and energy-intensive technologies for storage and transmission that would render the emissions-reducing benefits of such reconfiguration uncertain. The technologies of capitalism fit together into technical ensembles that exhibit a strong degree of path-dependency , meaning historical implementation strongly influences future development, precluding or making difficult many configurations we may find desirable …

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